SENIOR LEADER PERSPECTIVE

Leveraging Our War-Fighting Capabilities through the Lens of Operational Contract Support

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> *Those who are victorious plan effectively and change decisively. They are like a great river that maintains its course but adjusts its flow...they have form but are formless. They are skilled in both planning and adapting and need not fear the result of a thousand battles: for they win in advance, defeating those that have already lost.*
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> —Sun Tzu

Electrical power lines, contorted sheet metal, and piles of rubble littered the ground. Palm trees, which served as flying projectiles, laid inside facilities. Roofs of buildings were stripped bare leaving interiors exposed to moisture, ripe for mold and ensuing dry rot. This was the destruction that Hurricane Michael left behind on 10 October 2018 after the Category 4 hurricane pummeled Tyndall Air Force Base (AFB), Florida. Within hours, defense contractors arrived on scene to conduct aerial surveillance using drone technology, assess airfield damage, remove debris, generate emergency power, and establish communications. Throughout Tyndall's relief and recovery efforts, the power of operational contract support (OCS) provided a strategic response capability to the United States Air Force (USAF), our amazing Airmen, and the local community.

Left. An 821st Contingency Response Group forklift unloads cargo near a Tyndall AFB hangar damaged by Hurricane Michael.

Right. A destroyed fire pit training facility and Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC) Environmental building

(Sources: A1C Caleb Nunez, 6th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs, and the Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center)

OCS greatly benefits commanders who comprehend the importance of its use and how to leverage and employ it to shape the battlefield—to fight and win our nation's wars. When properly planned and executed, OCS positively influences the tactical, operational, and strategic environment. Understanding OCS is not just the commander's business; it is everyone's business—and all components critical to a successful campaign gain from appreciating the strategic impacts of OCS. Likewise, commanders and decision makers charged with contingency support, such as those leading Hurricane Michael relief and recovery efforts at Tyndall AFB, should recognize and take advantage of the interconnectedness of OCS throughout the planning process. This article presents lessons learned from the recent USAF emergency response activities (i.e., Hurricane Michael and Super Typhoon Yutu) and the United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDO-PACOM) pressure campaign to cover the basics of OCS, articulate how OCS is an indispensable war-fighting capability, and offer potential OCS training and exercise opportunities that should be exploited for the future.

Understanding the Basics of OCS

> *Cultivating a lethal, agile force requires more than just new technologies and posture changes; it depends on the ability of our warfighters and the Department workforce to integrate new capabilities, adapt warfighting approaches, and change business practices to achieve mission success. The creativity and talent of the American warfighter is our greatest enduring strength, and one we do not take for granted."*
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> —2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS)

Joint Publication (JP) 4-10, *Operational Contract Support*, defines *OCS* as "the process of planning for and obtaining supplies, services, and construction from commercial sources in support of joint operations."[1] Further, OCS involves three lines of effort (LOE): *contract integration*, *contracting support*, and *contractor management*. These LOEs, commonly referred to as "pillars," parallel their OCS activities: *plan*, *procure*, and *manage*. A general appreciation of these pillars enables the integration of these capabilities into the campaign planning and strengthens our ability to achieve the USAF's mission—to fly, fight, and win. . . in air, space, and cyberspace.

Contract integration (the *plan* pillar) occurs before and during all planning phases to anticipate and synchronize contracting support into the operation. In this LOE, requirement owners define and develop their requirements, and commanders (or designees) validate, approve, and prioritize these needs against those of competing mission partners or functions.[2] Determinations are also made as to whether requirements can or should be filled organically (by military forces) or nonorganically (via a contract). This analysis is best accomplished by a multifunctional team evaluating the pros and cons of each choice (e.g., to award a contract for a service

that could be accomplished by military assets and use those organic resources elsewhere). Establishing a multifunctional team of subject matter experts, doctrinally known as an *OCS integration cell*, helps to evaluate emerging requirements and limit confustion. For example, when recovering Tyndall AFB after Hurricane Michael, early requirements were generated by forces on the ground in Florida and by the Air Combat Command (ACC) Crisis Action Team (CAT) at JB Langley-Eustis Virginia. Complicating matters, multiple labor sources—both military and contractor—were requested to complete same or similar tasks and caused a duplication of effort. Following the devastation, tarping and building assessments were sought by three different entities: the Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron or Redhorse, Air Force Contract Augmentation Program (AFCAP) contractor, and the base operations support contractor. To create a unity of effort and deconflict demands from across the ACC CAT, the 325th Fighter Wing, Air Force Installation Mission Support Center (AFIMSC), and newly stood up task forces (TFs)—the TF Phoenix commander, Col Patrick Miller, instituted a requirements review board (RRB) rooted in OCS doctrine.

Since this RRB was key to synchronization efforts as well, the ACC director of contracting, Col Derek Blough, sent one of his best staff officers from the Air Force Installation Contracting Center (AFICC), ACC's operating location (AFICC/KC) to Tyndall to facilitate the implementation of OCS, examine priorities, and meet leadership's expectations. Once implemented, the RRB included representation from the 325th Mission Support Group (325th MSG) squadrons, three new TFs (i.e., TF Phoenix, TF Raptor tasked to make Tyndall's F-22 Raptors flyable, and TF HARP dedicated to the base's most valuable asset—its people), and all other base units with mission-essential requirements. Co-chaired by the 325th MSG commander, Col Matthew Jefson and Colonel Miller, this RRB met daily and orchestrated the employment of OCS to meet leadership expectations and address the devastation after Hurricane Michael. As a result, the successful execution of Tyndall's RRB reinforced to all stakeholders the necessity of this *contract integration* capability during all planning stages and the imperative of speed and agility.

Similarly, joint planning in the Pacific is underway to identify, validate, and prioritize requirements crucial for the first 30 days of the Korea Plan. Additionally, RRBs have been employed in US Central Command (CENTCOM) for years and are significantly more regimented because of the pace of operations and high audit interest in theater. In future conflicts, leadership should learn from these lessons and consider an RRB mirrored after Tyndall's more expeditious method and balanced against CENTCOM's standardized approach while avoiding any lengthy or administratively burdensome requirements validation processes. Regardless of how formalized an RRB becomes, speed and agility must remain integral factors.

Through the *contracting support* LOE (the *procurement* pillar), contracting professionals execute their authority and coordinate contracts in support of joint operations.[3] Having a general knowledge of the various contract vehicles accomplished by high-performing contracting units across the globe is valuable. Other great resources include the Air Force's Civil Augmentation Programs (AFCAP) and the Army's Logistics Civil Augmentation Programs (LOGCAP), which deliver a rapid-response capability in support of contingency and expeditionary operations. Within hours of Hurricane Michael's assault, the AFCAP contracting officer, Alex Larson, worked with the AFCEC, AFICC, and the 772nd Enterprise Sourcing Squadron (ESS) to direct the AFCAP contractor to mobilize and start contract performance. In the aftermath, the contracting community recommended an undefinitized contract action (UCA) to provide the swiftest method to begin on-site performance. Within 48 hours, the 772nd ESS and AFICC gained approval from the Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition to issue a UCA, which allowed the contractor to commence immediate recovery work up to a limited preestablished ceiling price. A few days later, the need for more contract support and funding became apparent. Therefore, the AFIMSC's combined AFCEC-AFICC-772nd ESS-Resource Management Team worked tirelessly to obtain expedited approvals to raise the UCA threshold and secure debris removal, damage assessment, mold mitigation, and grading. Furthermore, the contractor established facilities for temporary lodging, containerized kitchens, dining tents, hand-washing stations, showers, and latrines. The recovery team was also able to leverage contracts the local 325th Contracting Squadron (325th CONS), commanded by Maj Steven Fletcher, and the regional US Army Corps of Engineers already had in place (e.g., base maintenance contracts, engineering services, and privatized utilities). Existing contracts were utilized to build temporary perimeter fences, lease mobile office space, and fulfill many other needs. After requirements from Tyndall's RRB were approved, contracting activities quickly coordinated and determined the most appropriate contract vehicle to procure mission essentials while simultaneously ensuring supplies like generators and water did not compete with the local population's needs.

The last OCS LOE, *contractor management* (the *manage* pillar), involves control, support, and integration of contractor personnel and associated equipment deployed for use in the operational area.[4] Due to increases in weapons technology and the need for technical support, defense contractors play a critical role across the full spectrum of conflict. For example, fifth-generation fighters and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets typically deploy with a fairly significant contractor footprint. The figure portrays this continuum as depicted in JP 3-0, *Joint Operations.*[5]

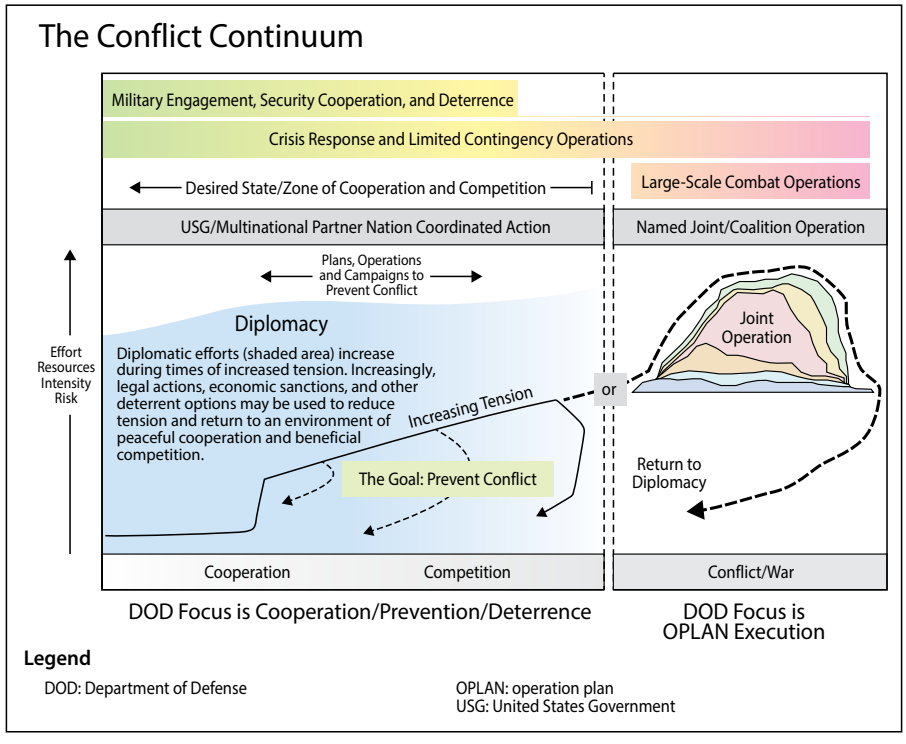

Figure. The Conflict Continuum, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*

Given these technological advances, the DOD requires proper government oversight to ensure contractors are performing in accordance with contract terms and conditions. To conduct this surveillance, contracting officers delegate oversight duties to a contracting officer's representative (COR) from the requirement owner receiving the contract services rendered. After the requiring activity's leadership nominates a primary and alternate, CORs are responsible for connecting with the contracting officer throughout the life of the contract to surveil and document the defense contractor's performance, which is why CORs must possess the requisite subject matter expertise.

In addition to establishing a collaborative "COR-contracting officer" relationship to ensure contractor oversight, it is important for commanders and war planners to weave defense contractors into the total force site picture, especially in the deployed environment. With both Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom (OIF), this became even more imperative when the ratio of contractor personnel to military personnel on the battlefield became equal to or greater than 1:1.[6] As commanders determine what government-furnished life support to provide (e.g., dining facility privileges, fitness center access, etc.), they must also evaluate how

many contractor personnel can be supported within the current environment, the potential costs of providing the support, and the associated security and legal implications that may arise from allowing contractors to live on base and utilize these services. For instance, due to the wreckage in the surrounding area after Hurricane Michael, base leadership initially authorized contractors to sleep on base and use the dining tent. These authorizations, typically reserved for contractors in deployed environments, were instituted at Tyndall AFB to accelerate recovery and minimize downtime. Once businesses and local restaurants reopened, the 325th CONS commander worked with wing leadership and the contractor to bring a responsible end to and transition off these exigent services. For these reasons, contractor management remains one of the most dynamic and complex aspects of OCS.

OCS is An Indispensable War-Fighting Capability

> *Thus, it is that in war the victorious strategist only seeks battle after the victory has been won, whereas he who is destined to defeat first fights and afterwards looks for victory.*
>
> —Sun Tzu

A basic appreciation of the OCS LOEs, or pillars, enables planners and decision makers to integrate OCS as a war-fighting capability. Likewise, OCS tenets are employed across the full spectrum of conflict from peace to war, including military engagement, security cooperation, deterrence, crisis response, disaster recovery, limited contingencies, or large-scale combat to enable agility and mobility. One concept to reinforce this needed flexibility is the Combat Support Wing (CSW), currently being tested to provide rapid deployment capability in complex, highly contested areas. To sustain such a high ops-tempo and allow for smaller footprints, OCS planning and execution are indispensable. For example, the devastation experienced at Tyndall AFB with Hurricane Michael indicate that OCS expertise (e.g., understanding how best to prioritize, triage, and incorporate contractor support and nonorganic commercial solutions into the plan) will be essential to recovering a base in the event of a future enemy attack. Consequently, as initiatives for the high-end fight are crafted, leaders should include knowledgeable and experienced OCS professionals in their planning discussions and deliberations.

Similarly, to bolster credible war-fighting capability, OCS experts should be familiar with accomplishing an "Aspects of the Operational Environment" (aOE) in the early planning stages. As JP 3-0 states, "Time spent 'to the left' allows the DOD to develop a deeper comprehension of the environment to see and act ahead of conflict flashpoints, develop options, and maximize the efficiency of resources."[7] A depiction of this "to the left" area is shown in JP 3-0's *The Conflict Continuum* (see figure) and displays a notional phasing construct demonstrating contingency

activities in an environment of cooperation and competition, before reaching conflict or war. As advised by the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, reliance on contractor support during contingencies introduces sizable risks that are not present in peacetime.[8] Thus, to mitigate these potential risks, an aOE analyzes the operational environment and conditions using an OCS lens and the political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information systems process.[9] In concert with and using the information obtained from key stakeholders (e.g., security forces, finance, civil engineering, communications and chief information officer, intelligence, logistics, legal/staff judge advocate, personnel, manpower, services, and joint planning counterparts), OCS professionals develop an initial aOE and refine these products while conducting country visits. For instance, in INDO-PACOM, the US Pacific Forces (PACAF) was designated the lead service for contracting coordination in 2014. Since then, OCS experts from AFICC/KH (PACAF operating location) have initiated an aOE throughout the Pacific. In the same way, other combatant commands would benefit from partnering with skilled OCS personnel to mirror INDO-PACOM's process and devise aOEs for their areas of responsibility.

> *We will emphasize intellectual leadership and military professionalism in the art and science of warfighting, deepening our knowledge of history while embracing new technology and techniques to counter competitors.*
>
> —2018 *National Defense Strategy*

Commanders who appreciate OCS and consider its second- and third-order effects in operational planning also take advantage of the nonkinetic power OCS yields to shape the environment—this is the "art and science" of war fighting. Think about the well-known Route Irish, which became notorious during OIF because it was the only connection between a primary operational base and the local airport in Iraq and was constantly under attack. Littered with trash, this road provided concealment for insurgent ambushes and improvised explosive devices to target military forces traveling the route. The commander's objective was to increase security along the road. Accordingly, the supporting contracting office awarded a contract to employ laborers to remove trash along the deadly road. In the daytime, workers removed the debris efficiently; however, rather than dispose of the trash, they stored it near their homes and returned the garbage at night, which allowed them to arrive the following morning with a job to do. They replicated this process daily, creating multiple strategic effects. First, it limited the opportunity for insurgents to hide IEDs, improving security and achieving the commander's primary objective. Second, the local economy was positively impacted due to the employment of local contractors. Finally, the majority of contractors hired were young

men between 18–25 years old—the age group targeted by terrorist organizations—which provided them an alternative to joining the insurgency.[10]

This real-world illustration of planning for and integrating OCS into operations also highlights the flexibility OCS offers to freedom of movement. As covered in the *Basics of OCS*, the USAF's global contracting capability acquires supplies and services rapidly for our military forces and requirement owners anywhere in the world. With proper planning and coordination, essential services and commodities such as tents, latrines, food services, and even security and aircraft maintenance can be performed by defense contractors while allowing Airmen to concentrate on other mission priorities and the USAF to dramatically reduce the demand on military airlift. During recovery efforts after Super Typhoon Yutu, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) experienced challenges getting supplies from the Northern Mariana Islands to Saipan.

Subsequently, to aid in joint Saipan and Tinian relief efforts, USAF contracting officers deployed to Saipan. Once on the ground, these contracting officers leveraged the 36th CONS in Guam as reach-back support to obtain urgently needed goods and services much swifter than FEMA could set up their procurement network. The most critical requirement these enablers provided was fuels support until Defense Logistics Agency's (DLA) operations were established. Similar to Tyndall's RRB, contracting professionals in theater also assisted TF West with an OCS construct to determine organic versus nonorganic support decisions, which ultimately reduced stress on the amount of sealift and airlift used.[11] Planners would gain by incorporating these recent OCS successes and lessons learned when faced with evaluating extensive mission lift requirements.

The civil-military impact of OCS is another factor commanders and planners should be sensitive to, since it may help influence the environment for our military forces. For example, establishing contracts with local vendors often bolsters the surrounding economy, both politically and financially. In addition to the advantages buying locally may have, commanders should deliberate the unintended consequences of procuring locally. Especially after natural disasters, consuming limited resources could have negative repercussions if it competes with what citizens need for their livelihood, results in inflating prices, or causes necessities to become unaffordable to locals. Disaster response contracting support may not be as detailed or to the level as operation plans; however, OCS expertise is key to deploying contracting officers quickly and enabling environmental scanning, commercial vendor assessments, local procurement availability, and tradeoff analyses regarding resources for requirement owners and decision makers to consider.

Exploiting OCS Training and Exercise Opportunities

Modernization is not defined solely by hardware; it requires change in the ways we organize and employ forces.

—National Defense Strategy

Since OCS is an indispensable capability, expertise must continue to be developed and cultivated across the DOD. To grow the educated and experienced OCS professionals that the department needs, this section offers potential OCS training and exercise opportunities that should be exploited to expedite the learning required. In recognition of the rise in relevance of OCS in today's national defense environment and its strategic implications, the Joint Staff (JS) published JP 4-10, *Operational Contract Support*, in 2008 to provide doctrinal expectations for joint forces and components. This doctrine drove a requirement for a dedicated OCS annex, known as Annex W. At this time, there is minimal USAF-level guidance on how to implement the concepts of OCS. Moreover, the USAF has not formally adjusted its organization at the component level to incorporate this new mission area; thus, it frequently becomes an additional duty for our staff officers. Further, the principles of OCS are not mentioned in USAF Installation Emergency Management Plans or Base Support Plans, even though these references provide vital support when implemented, as was discovered in Tyndall's relief and recovery operations. To complicate matters, USAF officers outside of contracting and logistics may not be exposed to OCS until intermediate developmental education (e.g., Air Command and Staff College). Fortunately, proactive readers have a few resources they can tap into to accelerate their OCS familiarity. For instance, Joint Knowledge Online offers an online introductory OCS Course, and the JS J-4 offers a more intensive two-week residence Joint OCS Planning and Execution Course, which focuses on responsibilities throughout the spectrum of conflict.

From 2014–17, the JS even sponsored an annual OCS Joint Exercise (OCS-JX) for several hundred USAF, US Army, Defense Contract Management, and DLA Joint Contingency Acquisition Support Office personnel from multiple functional backgrounds to improve DOD's OCS capabilities. Regrettably, in 2018, this premier OCS-JX was unfunded and cancelled for the long-term without any current plans to resurrect it. Moreover, for those assigned to combatant or component command staffs, OCS may be incorporated into most command post and table-top exercises but is not always included in base-level readiness or command-wide exercises. Therefore, it is the authors' opinion that the joint force and services would reap a huge return on the investment by modifying the previous OCS-JX curriculum and learning objectives to establish a new multifunctional exercise that addresses the current training gap, incorporates recent lessons learned, and improves OCS integration across all functional and staff equities—

not just contracting, logistics, and transportation—to enhance planning and readiness across the enterprise. In the interim, reaching out to logistics and contracting staff for more information to increase your functional area's aptitude, talent, and awareness of OCS would be beneficial and is encouraged.

Conclusions

> *Plan for what is difficult while it is easy, do what is great while it is small. The difficult things in this world must be done while they are easy, the greatest things in the world must be done while they are still small. For this reason, sages never do what is great, and this is why they achieve greatness.*
>
> —Sun Tzu

Commanders who understand the basics of OCS, appreciate the strategic implications of how OCS reinforces the elements of national power, and plan for OCS effectively are postured to support the DOD objectives and priorities. In addition, as our *NDS* specifies, we must be capable of defeating our enemies and achieving sustainable outcomes to protect the American people and US interests. OCS is a war-fighting capability that should be leveraged to achieve these outcomes. Defense contractors have and will continue to play an integral role in supporting our military forces at home station, overseas, and in future conflicts. In the case of recovering Tyndall AFB, Saipan, and Tinian, a few personnel on the ground armed with OCS knowledge, critical-thinking, and collaboration skills ensured mission requirements were met with speed and agility. This article shared lessons learned from Hurricane Michael, Super Typhoon Yutu, and INDOPACOM's progress on its aOE in the Pacific to explore the OCS fundamentals, emphasized the significance of OCS war-fighting capability, and recommended valuable education and training opportunities to exploit OCS further. Ultimately, just as Sun Tzu teaches on planning, leveraging OCS allows us to take advantage of preemptively *doing what is difficult while it is easy* and position ourselves for *greatness* to dominate before a crisis hits. ✪

Notes

1. Joint Publication (JP) 4-10, *Operational Contract Support,* 16 July 2014, I-2, https://www.jcs.mil/.
2. JP 4-10*,* 16 July 2014, I-2.
3. JP 4-10*,* 16 July 2014, I-2.
4. JP 4-10*,* 16 July 2014, I-2.
5. JP 3-0, *Joint Operation*, 17 January 2017, Incorporating Change 1, 22 October 2018, VI-2, https://www.jcs.mil/.
6. Defense Science Board, *Task Force on Contractor Logistics in Support of Contingency Operations,* Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Washington, DC, June 2014, 12, https://www.acq.osd.mil/.

7. JP 3-0, *Joint Operation*, 22 October 2018, VI-3.

8. Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Final Report to Congress Transforming Wartime Contracting Controlling Costs*, Reducing Risks, 2011, 28, https://cybercemetery.unt.edu/.

9. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual, Planning Operational Contract Support, 30 June 2017, https://www.jcs.mil/.

10. TSgt Beth Anshutz, "Effects-Based Contracting Used as Commander's Tool During OIF," 26 March 2015, https://www.army.mil/.

11. Col Brian Ucciardi, interview by co-author, 17 January 2019.

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